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THE PHYSICIAN'S
TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

THE PHYSICIAN'S TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

SIR ANDREW CLARK, BART.

M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.

Late President of the Royal College of Physicians

WITH PREFACE

BY

SIR DYCE DUCKWORTH

M.D., LL.D.

Treasurer of the Royal College of Physicians

Physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital

London

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY

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PREFACE

THE following Address was delivered by the late Sir Andrew Clark at the Annual Meeting of the Christian Evidence Society in 1890. It was reported *verbatim*, and sent to him at his own request for revision. For some reason, which cannot now be known, the leisure for revising the "proof" never came.

The Committee of the Society, however, are so convinced of the accuracy and value of the declarations set forth in this Address, that they venture, with the kind and cordial consent of Lady Clark, to publish it as it stands.

I have been requested as a friend, and one closely associated with the author as a colleague, to preface this very noteworthy testimony with

a few remarks, and I have gladly consented to do so.

I had never heard of this Address until it was thus brought to my notice. I have read and re-read it, and confess that I am deeply impressed by it.

The ideas, and the exposition of them, are so vividly characteristic of the man who uttered them, that I now almost feel as if I had heard them from his own lips.

One can picture his delivery of these concise and definite statements, and imagine the earnestness and fervour he threw into his words. I believe he must have had great satisfaction in thus delivering his mind, and making plain the conceptions which so deeply commended themselves no less to his large heart than to his strong intellect. Having reached these after, as he says, coming

“through seas of doubt to the quiet haven of belief,” he was one ready to plead, and, if need be, do battle, for the faith that was in him. Any matter verging on Theology had a great attraction for him; and, next to what he termed his “most jealous mistress,” Medicine, most certainly came Theological studies. What he terms, on p. 20, “the supreme question of this day and all days,” was one he had solved with certainty for himself; and it was, I think, in his solution of it that may be found the key-note and mainspring of his busy and useful life.

Sir Andrew Clark was a thoroughly convinced Christian, and an implicit believer in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. His philosophical mind allowed him to study without fear the fiercest attacks from all quarters directed against the faith, and he secured and

retained the friendship and regard of some of its greatest living opponents. He recognized the value of honest doubt, and regarded it as a help and no hindrance in intellectual research. Such a testimony from such a man as is unfolded in the following pages should surely avail much to quicken Christian faith in those who, from various causes, are weak in the mental grasp of evidence concerning things unseen, and to confirm it in those persons, now, alas, too numerous, who either make or seek difficulties, or have been ill-built up in the cardinal doctrine of Christianity.

I think I may venture to affirm that this vigorous testimony is expressive of the belief which is commonly held by the profession of which Sir Andrew Clark was so eminent a member. As Physicians we are brought so directly in contact with humanity in all its

phases, and see so deeply into the hidden realms of its woes and its needs, that we come to know well where true healing is to be found. We are thus able to bear witness to the light in which it is best to live, and we believe, further, that the Christian faith is not only the best one to live by, but the best one to die with.

“No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”—John i. 18.

“I and my Father are one.”—John x. 30.

These are the appropriate texts for this Address, and the following pages constitute, I believe, one of the best expositions of them that can anywhere be perused and taken in by both heart and head.

D.D.

February, 1894.

THE PHYSICIAN'S TESTIMONY FOR CHRIST

IN an old Hebrew book there are intimations made (which I think would not even now be gainsaid by the man of the world), namely, that the whole world lieth in wickedness—that man is the subject of a strange and mysterious spiritual cancer called *Sin*; that this disease is the cause of manifold and inexpressible evils to mankind; and that, going on unchecked, it ends, not only in the destruction and ruin of the individual, but also in the tainting of the race. Nor is this condition peculiar to the physical man; there

is a similar condition in the spiritual. It descends from you into your successors, and from them into generations yet unborn.

Now, this Society declares that for this sad condition a remedy exists. And it is with boldness that I say that this remedy exists, in spite of all the philosophers in the world, who have tried every remedy they can think of, and who are obliged to say that with the means at their disposal this disease *is incurable*. This Society says that there is a remedy; that it is easy of application; that the remedy is Divine; and that the object of its existence is to make known this remedy and to persuade men to try it. I have been asked not only to have the privilege of presiding, but I have been asked also to address you upon this very topic.

Remembering what is commonly said of

physicians, I suppose it is interesting to know how they would deal with a question of this kind. I have not the time, the knowledge and the ability to make any such address as ought commonly to be made in an assembly of this kind; for I hold that it is not only perilous, but pernicious, to make weak speeches in advocacy of the faith, still more to write weak books. I would rather, therefore, hold my peace than do that, and make my testimony in my life. I can, however, say a few words, and it may be expected that I should say a few words. I think that all personalities are very uninteresting, but if we have the courage and capacity to unfold the reasons of our belief, they are instructive. I am, I confess, a very unworthy Christian, but I should like to tell you in what manner I have come through seas of doubt to the

quiet haven of belief. I shall not give you anything but a plain and familiar account of my experience, as a busy man in the midst of constant interruptions and anxieties.

Now, the reasons, I apprehend, which influence a man in the acceptance of the Christian faith lie in two directions—*first*, in his head, *secondly*, in his heart. The reasons which lie in a man's heart are incommunicable; they are not capable of being entirely expressed in words; they work in secret in him; they grow with his growth in faith; they transfigure his life, and they become manifest, and manifest only, in the course of his life and in the influence which he comes to exert. I must, therefore, leave the reasons which lie in my heart—reasons which bear the strongest testimony to the truth of Christianity—and pass on to those other reasons—in my head, and

which, I think, we can deal with profitably, if we deal with them in the right way.

The first reason that occurs to me is that *there undoubtedly exists at the back of the universe a great Power*—a Power which permeates the universe, and of which Power we are, in some way, a part. On this point there has been a great advance in late years. Mr. Herbert Spencer, as the representative of the agnostic position—and he is, by the way, one of the most lucid and profound thinkers of the present day—says (as all Agnostics will say) that, undoubtedly, there does exist behind the universe a Power which permeates the universe, and of which we are, either directly or indirectly, a part. I then examine myself to see if there is any relation between myself and the Power behind the universe. And the first thing I think I see is that that Power must in some

sense be *personal*; for when I examine my own inner life I find that I am an intelligent being, and that my mere body does not express all that there is of me. When I examine the operations going on within me, I find I must speak of my affections, my feelings, and my will. Yes, I feel that this *I*, this mystery which exists in every man, is a power within his body, a power which is, perhaps, quite independent of his body, but associated with it.

Furthermore, having got so far in the belief of a Power behind the universe, and in the belief that this is a personal Power, I find on watching the events of my inner life that there are *two voices*, or *guides*, or *laws* within me. I do not know what to call them. I find there is a law or guide within myself, by which I discern, I desire, I take what I desire, I gratify myself in every conceivable way. And I have

observed that every individual and every nation which permits itself to be governed by this law of *Self* invariably degenerates and comes to destruction. Furthermore, I find that whilst I am following this law of *Self*, whilst I am eating and drinking and making merry, and thinking of nothing but my own gratification, there is another voice or guide in myself, quite of another kind, and inarticulate. And when I am following my own will, and following it to my own destruction, this mysterious, inarticulate voice protests, warns, and sanctions, and speaks strange things about sacrifice, holiness. What is this? that whilst I seek my own will, do my own will, and follow my own will, doing that which seems good to me, I am interrupted by this inner, inarticulate, mysterious voice. What is it? People call it *Conscience*. Everyone admits that it has a power which it seems

to have a *right* to exercise. Whatever their theological or religious opinions, everyone will admit that it has a rightful supremacy. Well, what is the meaning of this? I have asked myself over and over again, and I have come to the conclusion that the only possible explanation I can give is, that it is a revelation of the Power which lies behind the universe, and that it is in some way *Divine*.

But if it be true that the something which we call conscience is in some way or other Divine, and is some part of that Power which lies behind the universe—what does that supposition involve? Very wonderful things, and very helpful things, too, I think. First, it involves a community between man and that Power behind the universe—we will call it God; and, second, it unfolds a relationship between the whole creation. I ask myself,

therefore, "What is man?" I answer, "Man is Divine." In the constitution of man I begin to see an argument for the truth of Christianity. The constitution of man is thus three-fold—he has a body in common with the earth, with matter; he has mind in common with animals; and he has spirit in common only with God. Like Him, if it is not irreverent to say so, he has trinity in unity, and in the trinity and unity he is linked, on the one hand, with God, and, on the other, with the whole creation.

Having got thus far, it seems probable that this relationship which exists between man and God and creation, and the desire which I find in myself for something which I cannot get by myself—something which is higher and better than myself, but which I cannot get because I lack knowledge, strength

and light, and a pattern whereby I may shape my own life;—it seems, on the face of it, not improbable, but very probable, that God might make some revelation of Himself, and grant man, through that revelation, the strength, the light, and the pattern which he needs. And it is alleged that such a revelation *has been made by God* in the person of Jesus Christ; and that in Him he has provided the one remedy for the moral diseases of the world and the sin of man. Is that true? That, I apprehend, is the supreme question of this day and all days. If it be true, all is well; if it be false, all is ill. In the latter case we should have neither hope nor joy, and in the darkness in which we should live it would be much better for us to die. But, is it true? is it real? I am convinced myself that it is

true ; I am convinced that the allegation that God has revealed Himself to man in the person of Jesus Christ is true, and that it is impossible for the ordinarily constituted mind to doubt the fact of its truth. I do not say that there are no difficulties, nor that there is only harm in doubting. What should we be without doubt? We should be stagnant creatures! Doubt is our helper and not our hinderer. If rightly used these intellectual searchings into spiritual matters should help us.

I will now pass on to mention, more particularly, the special reasons which have influenced my own mind, and led me to accept Christianity.

The first thing which has influenced me to accept this Christian position is the obvious need, in man's utter darkness and helplessness,

of some revelation. If left to himself, following the natural law, the law of his own being,—assisted by all the teaching of Science,—he is incapable of maintaining himself in the state in which he ought to be. We have the history of individuals numerous enough, we have the history of nations numerous enough, to prove to us that no nation nor individual can be a law to themselves. Therefore man is not perfect man without a revelation.

And when I think of this need of a revelation and look to the person of Jesus Christ and His marvellous character, regarded from the human side, I am quite satisfied with the revelation that He made. In fact, if you were to give a month's study to the human character of Jesus Christ, I doubt whether any person in this room would not be struck afresh with the marvellous beauty, the marvellous exaltation, the marvellous in-

effableness of the human character of Jesus Christ. When you go on studying it you are brought at last to the conclusion that it is not possible for this to be a human character only. Think for a moment of the majesty of Jesus, of His simplicity, His sweetness and strength, His sympathy with the poor, and His love for all, the depth of His insight, the scope of His vision, of His sublime intellect, His unfaltering courage, His service of men and His mastery of souls, of the purity of His life, His exquisite tenderness for sinners: and think of Him with all this beauty of character living in the narrow circle of a provincial Jewish town, and yet being the most universal man that ever lived on the face of the earth. He was, for all that, capable of appealing to all, capable of teaching all, capable of feeling for all. If you take the greatest men of all times, what were they compared with Jesus.

Christ? What was Tacitus? A Roman. What was Socrates? A Greek. What was Shakespeare? An Englishman. What was Goethe? A German. Christ was not one of these, yet He was more than they all—He was the Redeemer.

Take another aspect of His character :—the sublimity of His claims. Some of the religions presented to mankind have been very touching. But never was a religion presented to mankind as Jesus presented it. Christianity was presented to mankind as He presented *Himself*. Think, then, of the sublimity of His claims! What did He say of Himself? “I have all power.” And when He was asked various questions as to Himself, what did He say? He said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” I often think that this does not strike people enough. Ask a teacher the right way

to truth, and He says, "I am *the* truth." What a strange claim! "Was it possible?" some would irreverently say. "Upon no psychological grounds can this be true," they would argue. Further, He claimed to be unlike any other human being, because He had powers which no other human being possessed. It was not only a *claim* that He was one with the Father, but it is obvious to anyone who studies the life of Jesus in the gospels that He *thought* as God, *spoke* as God, *acted* as God, *died* as God, and when, having died, He rose to undying life, He was *proved to be* God. So indeed He lives even now in the Church and in the midst of His people.

Here is another argument. If we look at the life of Jesus Christ from the historical side, we see Him as a country peasant, an uneducated carpenter. He must have been

uneducated, because He could not get any better knowledge, in the ordinary sense, than a poor, despised country town could give. He was, I say, a poor peasant carpenter, living in secret for several years, then coming before the world, and calling upon the people to listen to Him. And He delivered a gospel. He lived before them, and died an ignominious death. For the moment it seemed as if all was over, all lost. Yet it is alleged that within a day or two this Jesus rose from the dead, that many saw Him and conversed with Him, and that He gave inspiration to His Apostles; that He founded a Church, that no sooner had He left them than this Church rapidly grew, spread into all lands, became a Kingdom, altered the whole character of human thought; that this Church went wherever civilization was known; that it is with us to this day, in

spite of every conceivable attack made against it; that it is living, flourishing, and spending as much as it ever did, in spite of what distinguished philosophers say of it. I do not believe people are ready to put their hands into their pockets unless they believe in the work. I have ascertained, and I think I am accurate, that Christianity never did spend so much as now in its own advancement. If this looks like being dead, then I don't understand the matter.

There is one thing more. The character which I should like to have portrayed to you—the human character of Christ—is such that it leads you to ask if it is Divine. And when you ask this question, and once more study this character, in its simple, human, historical aspects, I think you will be prepared with me to come to the conclusion that from its human

side it is inexplicable on any merely human interpretation.

Now, I have an argument as to this—the merit of it lies with Dr. Row. I think it is an argument to be proud of—the importance of it is great. Assuming for the moment that what is called the doctrine of Evolution is true. (My argument is not that it *is* true, but I want to make a liberal concession.) Suppose, I say, it is true, then it follows as a necessary corollary that in every age the great man of the age represents the age—he is the product of the age; the age accounts for him; he is in harmony with his surroundings; he is an integral and homogeneous part of the time in which he dwells. And if he is in advance of the age, then he is in advance of it in the way in which it is going. Now, there is only one exception, that I know, to that law—the exception is in

the person of Jesus Christ. He did not represent the age; the age did not account for Him; He was not in harmony with His surroundings; and, being in advance of the age, He was not in advance in the way the age was going; He was not an integral part of His age. Account for this or give up the delusion that Evolution explains the character and life of Christ.

There is one other argument. You know a doctor of medicine is full of theories; and it is good it should be so, because hypothetical explanations of things, and suggestions for treatment of diseases stir us up, keep us alive, and cause us to maintain inquiries and experiments. I hear a man talking about Bright's Disease. "I should adopt such and such a method." I say, "Very well, let us try it." In that sense, in that sense only—apply this argument to Christianity—*Try it*. Though any

man who is arguing with me should show me that the grounds I have taken are unreal or false, or anything else, still—*Try it*. I believe I am justified in saying that, if tried in the right way, *it never fails*. So that when all arguments are at an end, if the man is earnestly seeking, striving for the truth; and if he can humble himself like a little child and say there is *something* in this Christianity, *let it be tried*; and if he approaches Christ, he will discover the most wonderful revelation that can be made to man; he will discover the way in which to live, to die; and how self-abasement is self-finding. He will discover, too, that the life-sacrifice which Christ asks, the life of service, the life of love, is cheap at the cost which it demands, and is found to be the only life which can be called life indeed.

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